

EN

Limmatstrasse 270, 8005 Zürich
kunsthallezurich.ch

Henrik Olesen

Copies of real-life

objects, tools and food

13.06.–06.09.2026

Kunsthalle Zürich

With *Copies of real-life objects, tools and food*, Kunsthalle Zürich presents the first solo exhibition by Henrik Olesen (b. 1967 in Esbjerg, Denmark) in Zurich for nearly two decades. Featuring new productions as well as a selection of existing works, the exhibition offers an insight into the artist's multifaceted working method and his longstanding exploration of normative systems of categorisation.

Since the 1990s, Henrik Olesen has been grappling with questions of identity, language and bodies, and their construction, in his work, in order to describe power relations and social norms. In doing so, he draws on a wide range of visual and material sources – from specific works of art and stylistic languages to simple materials and everyday objects – and incorporates a broad spectrum of (art) historical, subcultural, political and literary references in his work.

For the exhibition at Kunsthalle Zürich, Olesen pursues his ongoing interest in food chains as well as processes of production, consumption and digestion. Exemplifying this approach at the beginning of the exhibition – and at the top of the food chain – are the two predators, *Crocodile*, 2023, and *The earliest crocodilian, circa 95 million years ago*, 2024, constructed in plaster, jute, wood and wire mesh, and evoking a time before the emergence of humans. Making reference to their long evolutionary history – early ancestors of crocodiles emerged on earth around 200 million years ago – the works indicate their ambivalent role within the food chain: both threatening and threatened, hunters yet also part of a larger ecological and economic system in which they can become prey.

Developed for this exhibition, the installation *Copies of real-life objects, tools and food*, 2026, fills the room with tables of differing heights and white plinths on which an array of small- to medium-sized objects are arranged. Casts of food items such as eggs, chicken, apples, fish, canned goods and milk cartons are displayed alongside replicas of tools such as paintbrushes; some are packed in transparent plastic bags. Assuming the sleek modes of display found in shops or department stores, the arrangements are inevitably reminiscent of still lifes – a genre that can be traced throughout art history from murals in Pompeii to Dutch painting of the 17th century or to Modern and contemporary art, thus challenging and suspending concepts of time across centuries. Olesen's works likewise superimpose different periods of time, by bringing classical still-life motifs like asparagus and lemons (Édouard Manet), fish (Gustave Courbet) or chickens (Francisco de Goya) into dialogue with

everyday objects of contemporary consumer culture such as laptops and keyboards.

Translated into a variety of materials including plaster, silicone and acrylic and epoxy resins, some of the casts in the installation are painted, while others are left untouched. This cadence is interrupted by occasional painted readymades, increasingly dissolving categories of original and copy, representation and object. Form no longer appears as something abiding and unequivocal, but rather as something that can continually be digested and reconstituted through repetition, reproduction and material transformation.

The works presented on the upper floor of Kunsthalle Zürich invert the logic of the lower level. While the white walls downstairs remain empty and untouched, the exhibition upstairs unfolds around an empty centre, limned by 25 hand-made glass vitrines on the walls. If the works on the lower floor investigate processes of production and consumption as well as the plasticity of objects, the upper floor turns the focus towards the supposed neutrality of methods of presentation and display.

Yet instead of protecting objects or artefacts the vitrines appear – with a few exceptions – to be empty. Mounted with hefty brackets to the walls of Kunsthalle Zürich, they frame no more than the air inside, the white wall behind each and their own means of suspension, thereby becoming images of themselves. Marked by worn surfaces, fingerprints, scratches and imperfect joints they no longer function as simple containers. Instead, traces of production together with notes on Post-its and adhesive tape transform them into carriers of information about their own making.

With their serial logic, the transparent glass structures recall the austere formal language of Minimal Art. While some of them follow the sober naming conventions of the 1960s and '70s with titles such as *Untitled 11*, 2021, or *As yet untitled 3*, 2026, other titles including *Depression*, 2026, *Dispossession 1*, 2021, or *Madhouse*, 2019, open up a field of subjective meaning, invoking bodily or psychological states that were typically omitted from the vocabulary of Minimal Art.

If Olesen's works on the upper floor of the exhibition offer themselves as surfaces for physical and affective projection, the reproduced objects on the lower floor, rendered in different colours and materials, continually undermine fixed categories and attributions. Taken together, *Copies of real-life objects, tools and food* proposes an open network of associations and relations in which bodies and things merge, and meanings continually evolve, shift – or collapse into one another.

Henrik Olesen (b. 1967 in Esbjerg, Denmark) lives in Berlin. His solo exhibitions have taken place at Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein (2025), Den Frie, Copenhagen (2025), Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid (2019), Wattis Institute, San Francisco (2017), Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2012), MoMA, New York (2011) and at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich (2007). In addition, his works have been seen in group exhibitions at venues including the Kunsthalle Friart Fribourg (2026), New Museum, New York (2026), MASP – São Paulo Museum of Art (2024), Kunstverein Graz (2024), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2023), KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2021), Bienal de São Paulo (2018, 2017), Punta della Dogana, Venice (2015), La Biennale di Venezia (2013) and the Generali Foundation, Vienna (2012).

The exhibition is curated by Fanny Hauser and is supported by the New Carlsberg Foundation. With special thanks to Galerie Buchholz.

ART EDUCATION

Henrik Olesen's exhibition is accompanied by an extensive art education programme. This includes workshops for schools as well as free public tours. Further information can be found on the Kunsthalle Zürich website.

'Afternoon for all' creative workshop
Saturday 4 July 2026, 3–5 pm

EVENTS

Zurich's Long Night of Museums
Saturday 5 September 2026, 6 pm–2 am

Full details of further Kunsthalle Zürich events can be found on our website.

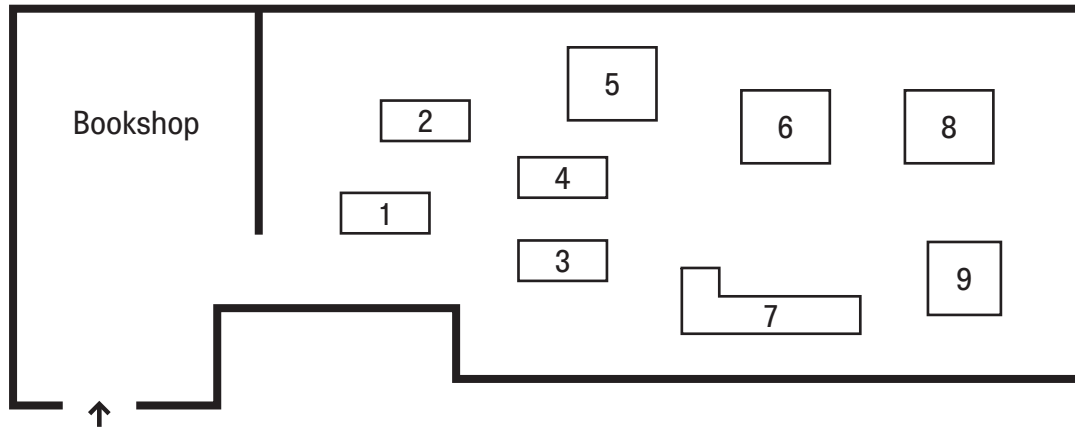
PUBLICATION AND EDITION

A monographic publication will accompany the exhibition, designed by Teo Schifferli with contributions by Annie Ochmanek and Dieter Roelstraete; it will be published by DISTANZ in winter 2026.

The t-shirt *Food Chain* (2026) made for this exhibition is available in the Kunsthalle Zürich shop, alongside a new limited production run of Olesen's t-shirts *Self Sex* and *Patriarchal Sex* (both from 2013) as well as the designs *Un Captif Amoureux* and *Yes/No Future* (both 2016) created in collaboration with artist Gerry Bibby.

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LOWER FLOOR

Prehistoric animals, 2023/24

- 1 *The earliest crocodilian, circa 95 million years ago, 2024*
 Crocodile: plaster, wood, metal, rabbit wire, jute, acrylic paint; table: wood, plastic sheet, acrylic, tape
- 2 *Crocodile, 2023*
 Plaster, acrylic, clear varnish, fabric, wire, wood

Both works courtesy the artist and Galerie Buchholz

Copies of real-life objects, tools and food, 2026

- 3 *Fish in bags, 2026*
 Acrylic resin, plaster, acrylic paint, varnish, LD-PE (nine objects on table)
- 4 *Fish and keyboard, 2026*
 Acrylic resin, LD-PE, wood, metal (two objects on table)
- 5 *Fish and brushes with hand-painted packaging, 2026*
 Acrylic resin, plaster, acrylic paint, jute, varnish, hand-painted readymades, wood (14 objects on plinth)
- 6 *Group of objects incl. chicken and eggs, 2026*
 Acrylic resin, silicone, epoxy resin, rubbish, plaster, acrylic paint, varnish, LD-PE, one hand-painted readymade (tin), wood, metal (ten objects on plinth)

- 7 *Group of objects incl. 2 laptops, 2026*
 Epoxy resin, acrylic resin, plaster, jute, steel, spraypaint, acrylic paint, LD-PE, wood (six objects on plinth)
- 8 *Group of objects incl. cleaning agent and chocolate, 2026*
 Acrylic resin, silicone, plaster, acrylic paint, varnish, two readymades (one hand painted), wood (16 objects on plinth)
- 9 *What is a thing?, 2026*
 Epoxy resin, silicone, acrylic resin, plaster, wood, glue, jute, steel, spraypaint, acrylic paint, LD-PE, one readymade, metal (13 objects on two tables)

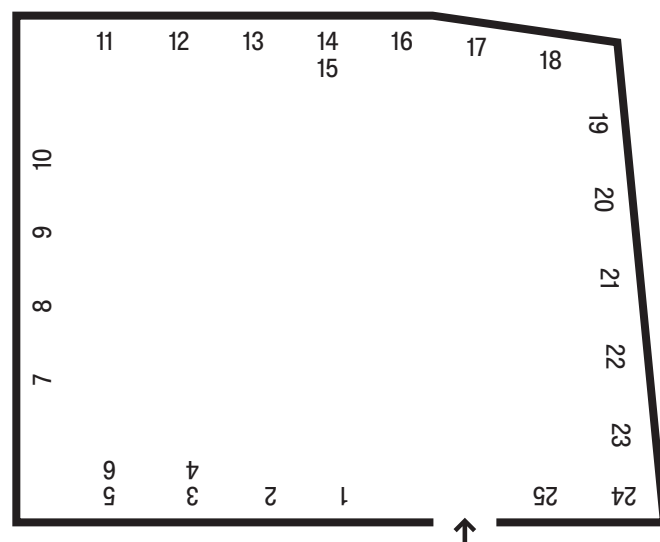
All works courtesy the artist, Galerie Buchholz, Reena Paulings Fine Art and Galleria Franco Noero

BOOKSHOP

Food Chain, 2026
Un Captif Amoureux, 2016/26 (with Gerry Bibby)
Yes/No Future, 2016/26 (with Gerry Bibby)
Self Sex, 2013/26
Patriarchal Sex, 2013/26

T-Shirts, silkscreen print on cotton, each an edition of 30

UPPER FLOOR



- 1 *As yet untitled 1*, 2026
Glass, acrylic, glue, metal brackets
- 2 *As yet untitled 2*, 2026
Glass, acrylic, glue, metal brackets
- 3 *Glass box high*, 2019
Glass, glue, metal brackets
- 4 *Glass box low*, 2019
Glass, glue, metal brackets
- 5 *As yet untitled (high)*, 2026
Glass, acrylic, glue, metal brackets
- 6 *As yet untitled (low)*, 2026
Glass, acrylic, glue, metal brackets
- 7 *My father*, 2026
Glass, acrylic, glue, metal brackets
- 8 *Depression 1*, 2018
Glass, glue, paint, metal brackets
- 9 *Depression 2*, 2018
Glass, glue, paint, metal brackets
- 10 *Depression*, 2026
Glass, glue, paint, metal brackets
- 11 *Dispossession 1*, 2021
Glass, glue, painted metal brackets, permanent marker, tape, ballpoint pen
- 12 *Dispossession 2*, 2021
Glass, glue, metal brackets, screws, tape, inkjet print on self-adhesive film, permanent marker
- 13 *Madhouse*, 2019
Glass, acrylic, glue, metal brackets
- 14 *Untitled 8*, 2021
Glass, glue, metal brackets, screws, Post-it, tape, permanent marker, paper, ballpoint pen
- 15 *Untitled 9*, 2021
Glass, glue, metal brackets, screws, Post-it, tape, permanent marker, paper, ballpoint pen
- 16 *As yet untitled 1*, 2018
Glass, glue, silicone, paper receipt, metal brackets
- 17 *Untitled*, 2021
Glass, glue, metal brackets, acrylic paint
- 18 *As yet untitled*, 2026
Glass, glue, silicone, metal brackets, acrylic, tape, permanent marker
- 19 *As yet untitled 3*, 2026
Glass, glue, metal brackets, acrylic, tape
- 20 *Arm*, 2026
Glass, glue, metal brackets, tape, Post-it
- 21 *As yet untitled 8*, 2018
Glass, acrylic, glue, metal brackets
- 22 *As yet untitled 5*, 2026
Glass, acrylic, glue, painted metal brackets, tape
- 23 *As yet untitled 4*, 2018
Glass, acrylic, glue, metal brackets
- 24 *Untitled 11*, 2021
Glass, glue, silicone, metal brackets, screws, Post-it, tape, permanent marker
- 25 *Self-image*, 2021
Glass, glue, partly painted metal brackets, screws, tape, permanent marker, paper, ballpoint pen, inkjet print on yellow paper

All works courtesy the artist, Galerie Buchholz, Reena Spaulings Fine Art and Galleria Franco Noero

OPENING HOURS
Tue–Sun 11 am–6 pm
Thu 11 am–8 pm
Mon closed

Kunsthalle Zürich receives funding from



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L U M A
F O U N D A T I O N